

# Carlisle Board of Assessors

## Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting date: Friday, January 28, 2022

Town Hall, Heald Conference Room

66 Westford St.

Carlisle, MA 01741

BOA members in attendance:

- Ken Mostello, Chair
- Teresa Kvietkaukas
- David Boardman

Others attending: Incoming Principal Assessor, Brian MacDonald

Motioned for approval: Ms. Kvietkaukas

Second: Mr. Mostello

Roll call vote: 2-0 (Mr. Boardman not present at time of voting)

Approval date: 2/10/22

Chair Mostello called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm.

Chair Mostello motioned for approval on meeting minutes for 12/17/21, 12/28/21 & 12/29/21—all of which had been distributed to the BOA members prior to the meeting for review. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kvietkaukas. The roll call was 3 in favor, none opposed.

Mr. Mostello opened by welcoming Mr. MacDonald to his new position and went on to say that the board members were enthusiastic about his appointment. He added that we had a strong pool of candidates but the decision to recommend him was unanimous. Mr. MacDonald asked why he was selected. Mr. Mostello offered that he couldn't speak for the other members, but personally he wanted an assessor who would transform the department and it was evident Mr. MacDonald would do so.

Mr. Mostello then asked Mr. Boardman to send written notification to the remaining candidates for the assessor position informing them that the position was filled. Mr. Boardman agreed to do so.

Mr. MacDonald offered the following input. He said that based on his experience in Stoneham and based on prevailing market conditions, he expected a significant increase in assessments

later this year. Mr. Mostello noted that Patriot, which had done the 2021 adjustments, didn't increase them by much, and he found that surprising given market conditions. He went on to say that he was disinclined to challenge it at a time when the focus was on the replacement of the assessor personnel.

Mr. MacDonald made the following recommendations for realigning department duties. First, he said that he would like to start to review several of the annual taxpayer filings earlier in the year like exemptions. Board members nodded in agreement with comments made that it would improve service to the taxpayers. Mr. MacDonald added that he would like to make on-premises assessments standard operating procedure for any resident filing for abatement or the resident would receive an automatic denial. Mr. Mostello mentioned that the policy was de facto in place since abatements were rarely approved if an on-premises inspection was necessary to evaluate an abatement. After some discussion, the board agreed.

Next, Mr. MacDonald stated he would like to undertake the interim annual adjustments personally which traditionally had been done by Patriot. Thirdly, he mentioned that he would like to see the cyclical field reassessments done by either Patriot or by the new assistant. Traditionally, they were done by Melissa Stamp, but the board members were concerned that the department may have fallen behind in recent years due to Ms. Stamp's failing health. The DOR requires that all properties are field inspected at least once every 10 years.

Mr. MacDonald continued by displaying to the board a PowerPoint presentation he had done for the Stoneham BOA on proposed adjustment. Mr. Mostello mentioned that he felt there was plenty of opportunity to improve the annual assessment adjustments and was looking for some added management and analysis incorporated into the process, something he felt was lacking with Patriot. He went on to say that he liked Mr. MacDonald's idea, because he felt the procedure had a serious impact on taxpayers, and this change would finally give the board the information it needed to conduct proper oversight.

The conversation then shifted to the cyclical field assessments that had been done by Ms. Stamp in the past. Mr. MacDonald suggested that these could be done by the assistant to be hired. Mr. Mostello mentioned that there would be potential cost offset by doing so, because the board had been interested in elevating the position to provide greater depth of skills. Mr. MacDonald mentioned that it would be necessary to pay more if the board wanted this person to take on additional duties. By offsetting the cost of the work performed by Patriot, Mr. Mostello felt he could justify an increase in pay for the assistant position. Mr. MacDonald agreed. Mr. Mostello offered that he would continue this conversation with the FinCom and with the Select Board members.

Mr. Mostello mentioned that when the new assistant was hired, he would like to see that person attend board meetings. He noted that he felt the assistant was never a process to continue the skill development of the assistant in the past and that deficiency cost the town dearly when Melissa passed away. He added the duty of keeping the minutes could be done by the new assistant, a duty he did not relish. The group laughed and agreed that made sense.

The conversation briefly turned to the matter of maintaining GIS maps. Mr. MacDonald mentioned that he could help in the short run, but that the town would need to find the

resources to maintain these going forward. Ms. Kvietskukas noted that map maintenance is a problem that needs to be addressed. She had investigated the matter, and there was no imminent solution in hand. The responsibility is owned by the BOA which historically outsourced it to a company in Maine, but that company was no longer working with that map format and recommended the town look elsewhere for help.

Mr. Mostello passed out the Select Board shorts that were published in the January 11, 2022, Mosquito. He mentioned that was concerned that proposed changes to the senior tax deferment program introduced by COA Director Ingersoll could adversely impact the town's financial health. The proposal called for more relaxed income eligibility requirements and much lower interest rates. Mr. Mostello mentioned that the program worked in the past because few taxpayers applied. Now, with the combination of relaxed eligibility and attractive interest rates, an incentive to participate would be created. He then asked if the board agreed that there was a legitimate concern here and, if so, what if anything the board should do about it. Mr. Boardman offered some input and said he understood the concern, but thought the matter was really a financial matter, not an assessment one, and, therefore, should be referred to the FinCom. Both Ms. Kvietskukas and Mr. Mostello agreed with Mr. Boardman and Mr. Mostello agreed to take up the matter with the board's FinCom liaison.

Chair Mostello introduced a motion to adjourn at 4:30. The motion as seconded by Ms. Kvietskukas and carried 3-0.